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THE ELECTRIC SPIRIT

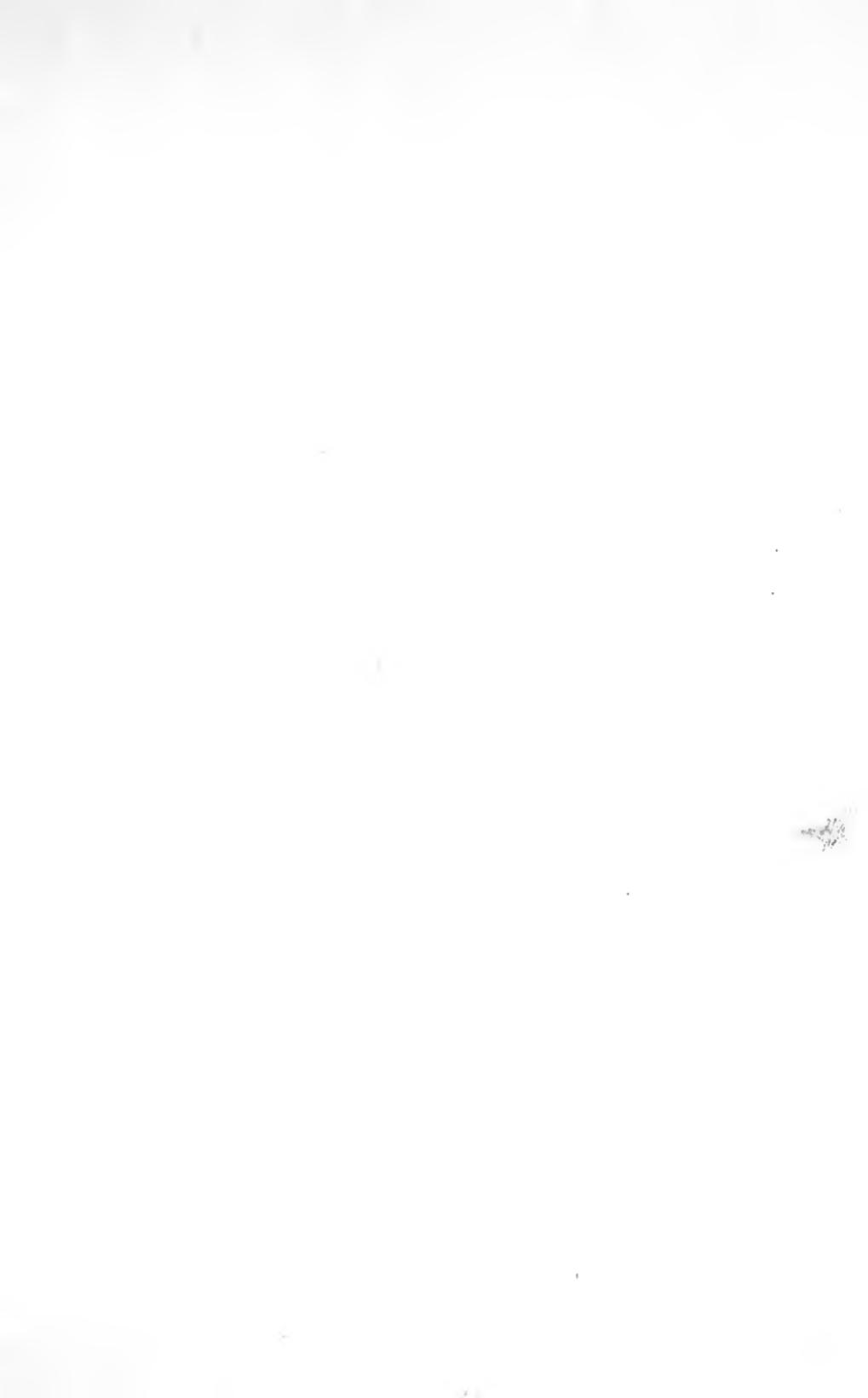
AND OTHER POEMS

MARION COUTHOUY SMITH



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W. H. Weston
London



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The Electric Spirit

and Other Poems by

Marion Couthouy Smith



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1906

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ASCIPTION

To him whose course no tyrant fear controls;
Ruler, inspirer, friend of noble souls.

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THE ELECTRIC SPIRIT

With wild wings fettered I ride the wires,
My life finds issue in blinding fires,
Bright shapes are wrought by my flying breath,
But my touch is flame, and my kiss is death.

Since man hath bound me with coil and chain,
Nor sea nor space can his word restrain;
I wind my circles of burning speed
The round globe over to serve his need.

Of warring winds I am king and lord;
The storms come wielding my radiant sword.
I laugh in light as the swift strokes fly;
The sullen thunders make slow reply.

With mystic passion I yearn from far
To my secret home 'neath the northern star,
And thence, on the vast black walls of night,
I fling great rays from my gates of light.

Time flees before me, and none may know
My course as from star to star I go,
For I am life. In the utmost dark
God's touch enkindled my fervid spark.

Think ye to know me, O ye who raise
My torch of flame on the world's highways?
Ask him whose throne is the central light
Of countless suns in their wheeling flight.

With fierce strength fettered, I ride the wires.
Prometheus-spirits have tamed my fires,
But God alone, in His chosen hour,
Can free the force of my nameless power.

THE CALL OF THE HOUR

To the Poets

Turn, turn to the East, ye singers,
Lest the day come unaware!
Hark, how the steps of the ringers
Sound on the belfry stair.
Soon shall the bells of morning chime—
The loud heart-throbs of hurrying Time—
And every pulse shall beat in rhyme
To the song of hope they bear.

No moment is left for weeping
O'er the joys of vanished night;
The soft-footed hours of sleeping,
The feasting and mad delight.
Ye may not loiter by lingering streams,
To watch the maze of the moving gleams,
The shadow-dance of the world of dreams,
Under the stars' cold light.

While, lost in your memories tender,
Sighing and dazed, ye stand,
There broadens a line of splendor
On the black edge of the land;
The fair trees stir from root to crest,
The wild bird flutters within the nest,
With the thrill of dawn on his ruffled breast;
The day! The day 's at hand!

When the bird up-starts to shame you,
And sings with his small heart's might,
Shall the past and the darkness claim you,
Ye prophets of God's own light?

Though others sleep, it is yours to praise
The far-seen glory of coming days,
Their mighty march from the unknown ways
Through the star-paths of the night.

The voice of your dream is soundless,
In the strong world's waking ear,
Though the grief of your soul were boundless,
The love of your life were dear.
No heart will heed them, no voice reply;
For the soul of the race lifts up a cry
That mounts at last to the brightening sky,
In loud demand and clear.

For the rolling wheels make thunder;
The coils of the lightning sweep
The round world over and under,
And the wide, wild seas o'er-leap;
And where the ranks of the toilers stand,
They wait for the touch of hand to hand,
And the song that their hearts can understand,
Calling from deep to deep.

Then turn to the East, ye singers,
And chant the world's new rhyme!
Bend, bend, ye sturdy ringers,
Sounding the morning chime.
Till faith shall conquer, and hope make bright
The secret places of wrong and blight;
Come, lead the chorus of love and light,
Ye prophets of God's own time!

THE OLD AGE TO THE NEW

The New Age comes from the void, wonder and
joy in her eyes ;
The touch of her captive lightnings has fringed
her robe with flame ;
The song on her lips is strange ; it is not plain to
the wise,
But the strong of soul shall heed, and swell it
with deep acclaim.

The Old Age stands by the verge, weary she is,
yet glad ;
Her brows are weighted with laurels ; her
hands are heavy with gold.
“Now hail to you who shall share all hope and
gain I have had,
Who comes with a strength untried, with a
glory yet untold !

“Hail to you, who shall reign while I go down
to my rest !
Lo I have lived, I have conquered, I have
wrested gifts from Fate !
Queen I have been of the Ages, strongest and
richest and best ;
Thou art warden of all — see that thou keep
thy state.

“Vision is given me now to see what thou may’st
attain.
To know the glory and grace that lie within
thy power ;
But if thou fail or win, if thy portion be loss or
gain,
That is hidden from me, to be told in thy trial
hour.

“All is thine for the striving,— love, and the
reign of peace;
Great, triumphant toil, and crowns for the
toiler’s brow;
Sin and greed to be vanquished, wrath and pain
that shall cease;
Joy of a quest fulfilled, of a vast heroic vow.

“Yet amid all thy gain, one brave thing shalt
thou lose,
When the last of the fighting men shall draw
his dying breath;
When to Manhood comes no more the hour in
which to choose
Whether to live at ease, or serve a cause to
the death.

“So the test shall be thine, to see that the peace
be true,
To watch that the reign of law be pure as
the reign of might;
To guard lest the idol of gold that’s set on high
in thy view
Be the god that thy children worship, the
shadow to dim thy light.”

The New Age comes from the void, wonder and
joy in her eyes;
The Old Age stands by the verge, in her pas-
sion of prophecy.
“And oh! that I might see the end of thy strife!”
she cries;
“And oh! that I might know if my soul’s desire
shall be!”

THE NEW MIRACLE

I have sent my word to the goal,
Through the spaces vast and bare,
Through leagues of the pathless air,
Straight to your listening soul.

The void is my willing thrall,
Knowing no bound nor bar;
I stand in my place afar,
And fling you the voiceless call.

Whence is its vivid speed?
What is the path it knows?
Silent and swift it goes,
Where the waiting wire gives heed.

From the living touch it flees;
And the ships no longer lie
Lost between wave and sky—
They whisper from soundless seas.

And the word I send along,
Through the spaces bright and bare,
Through leagues of the desert air,
Turns to a spheric song.

TO-DAY

Queen of the flying moments,—stern To-day!
Our lives are vibrant to thy sceptre's sway;
Unshaped To-morrows wait upon thy breath,
Thy hand lets fall the seed of life or death;
And ev'n the irrevocable Yesterdays
Shine with new light beneath thy searching rays.—
Teach me obedience to thy swift control,
And smite thy meaning through my brain and soul.

A HOPE FAR OFF

Shall not my soul stand facing thine
In the great days to be,
Drinking its faith and force like wine,
Voicing its rhapsody?
I who have sung, thou who has wrought,
Shall we not feel at length
Through the vast changes death has brought,
Our spirits' dual strength?

Shall not the friendship we have known
In these hot fields of strife
Be yet more perfectly our own
On the clear heights of life?
I, who have felt thy larger grasp,
Thou, who hast read my heart,—
Our hands have met in that long clasp
Time had no skill to part.

Should I not lose, in losing thee,
A light on all my years,
The dearest dreams of memory,
The source of smiles and tears?
Then must I keep this thought of grace,
That in the lands unknown,
Standing, full-statured, face to face,
Our souls shall claim their own.

THE GIFTS OF LOVE

My love would have me brave and bright
In silks and gems and golden rings;
And I must laugh with gay delight,
When some rich gift he brings.

But ah! The little gifts can move
My heart with stronger, tenderer power;
And I must weep for very love
When he but brings a flower.

THE EYES OF LOVE

Blind souls, who say that Love is blind!
He only sees aright;
His only are the eyes that find
The spirit's inner light.

He lifts, while others grope and pry,
His gaze serene and far;
And they but see a waste of sky
Where Love can see the star.

NOT IN THE HAND I LOVE

When for my sin Thou chastenest me, O Lord,
And man must be Thine instrument of woe,
In the stern hand of some unvanquished foe
Place Thou the power to smite me, and the
sword!

Not in the hand I love, oft held in mine,
For joy or comfort, through the changing day;
Or if that hand must wound me, let it slay!
That from its lost clasp I may pass to Thine.

THE HERMES OF PRAXITELES

This Hermes bears an aspect too divine
For Zeus' light-heeled and trick-brained mes-
senger;
We cannot fancy those deep curls astir
In breezy flight, nor those calm eyes ashine
With scintillant mirth and madness. How be-
nign
Those straight still brows! So fair a messen-
ger
Was princely Gabriel, as he bent to her
Who asked him, awe-struck, "Can such grace be
mine?"

From those sweet lips what golden message came,
Forever stilled! The Heavens are silent now,
Or only speak in wind and whispering bough.
Now dwells the Word within no rhythmic
span
Of song or rune, but in the heart of man,
Divinely breathed, it kindles like a flame!

LIFE WITH LOVE

From dark to dark we fly,
From outer to inner portal;
But Love will join us, winging by,
And he too is immortal.

From birth to death we go,
Through the dark doors — ah, whither?
But Love's before us, and we know
He, too, is flying thither.

Then forward without fear!
For Love leaves light behind him;
And where he goes is best of cheer,
For Death can never find him!

HELPLESS LOVE

If I could work for thee, if I could spend
The long, long days in labor for thy sake,
And of some task — to me most blessed! —
make
A link with thee, toward whom my wishes tend;
If with my very life I could defend
Thy tender life from pain, — I should not
grieve!
Vainly I long of my sad hours to weave
A web in whose fair texture I might blend
Gold threads of good for thee. But time goes
by,
And I sit helpless, — bearing all the strain
Of love's great strength, held down as with a
chain,
And nought to do for thee, not even to die!
Only my heart seeks Heaven with this one plea,
That of my pain God shape some good for thee!

TO ONE YOUNG AND FAIR

As yon dark pine tree, sad with memory,
Looks down upon the violet-blooms that start
Low at its feet, and hymns with loving art
Their gentle grace, in old-world minstrelsy ;
So I look down, most dear, and sing of thee,
And feel thy beauty nestling at my heart.

A CHOICE

Those who have fallen let others seek,
With soothing voice and lifting hand,
If God but give me leave to speak
One word of cheer to those who stand.

Let others with their love enfold
The feebler souls that cling to wrong ;
I would but touch with steadyng hold
The bitter burdens of the strong.

Great patient souls, that make no plaint,
Till death reveals the weight they bore !
They close the ranks of those who faint,
And take their toils forevermore.

THE AWAKENING

Darkness — silence — scarce a breath :
 Love is lying marble-still.
Is it sleep, or is it death ?
 Can the full heart pause at will ?
She who loves sits desolate,
 Whelmed in midnight cold and deep ;
While her very pulses wait,
 Asking, Is it death or sleep ?

(Still thee, Soul ! Whate'er it be,
 Quell the passion in thy breast.
Questioned, Love must rise and flee :
 Keep thy vigil ; let him rest.
Stir not, while he slumbers on,
 Till he sigh and softly rise :
Then shalt thou, who deemed him gone,
 Feel his kiss upon thine eyes !)

Darkness ! But her gasping breath
 Cuts the silence like a cry ;
She will know if this be death,
 Though her trembling gladness fly !
On her lamp's rim breaks a spark,
 Waxes to a slender flame ;
And her white face, 'gainst the dark,
 Shows, a mask of fear and shame.

Slowly moves the fiery blot
 Over flower-traced wall and floor.
(Wake him not, — ah, wake him not !
 Love awakened dreams no more !)
Slips the light, at her command,
 O'er the fair extended form,
O'er the listless, curving hand,
 O'er the pure lips, breathing warm.

Is it sleep, or is it death?
Ah, she knows! The white lids rise,
Now unveiling, in a breath,
All the glory of his eyes!
Love upsprings beneath her gaze,
Fleeting, flashing through the night,—
Leaving all the air ablaze
With the radiance of his flight!

L'ENVOI

Keep thy vigil, doubting Soul;
Still thee, till Love's sleep be o'er;
Wait thy doom of joy or dole:
Love, so roused, is thine no more!

ON THE RIVER AT NIGHT

The city writes, in hieroglyphs of fire,
The story of her life,
Her stress of toil, her passion of desire,
Her ecstasy of strife.

Each night, on either margin of the stream,
Her page of flame unrolls;
And all along the wave, with varied gleam,
She draws her jewelled scrolls.

Her soul's appeal is flashed upon the night,
While, writ in mightier lines,
With clustered stars, in characters of light,
Some calm, great answer shines.

THE KITTEN

Small, sinuous thing, sleek shape of grace,
Within thy drowsy babyhood
There dwells that smouldering spark of race
Which flames forth in the jungle brood;
In thy curled softness lies asleep
The splendor of the tiger's leap.

Thine eyes a jewel-gleam disclose,
Where lurks that soul of fierce desire
That through the tropic midnight glows
In two bright spheres of baleful fire.
So Nature, in some wayward hour,
Draws in small lines her types of power.

Thy velvet footfalls, as they glide,
Recall the beauty and the dread
Of that long, crouching, sinewy stride,
That furtive, fierce, forth-reaching head;
We feel that deadly presence pass,—
The dry, slow rustle in the grass.

Since in thy lithe, swift gentleness
Such hints of power and blight are shown,
What kinship must the soul confess
With forces mightier than her own?
What beast, what angel, shall have sway,
When we have reached our utmost day?

THE HUNTING-CALL OF SPRING

Clear wind the horns of Spring again,
 (Hark, forward — hark!)
O'er mellowing hills they ring again,
 Farewell to cold and dark!
Up, up! and brush the dews away;
The sun comes laughing through the gray,
To gild the flying robes of May;
 Hark, forward — hark!

The hordes of hope are out again;
 (Hark, forward — hark!)
Room for the merry rout again,
 Whose revels chase the dark!
Their couriers are the dancing showers,
And through the song-awakened hours
The bright ranks follow — flowers on flowers;
 Hark, forward — hark!

Beside the hurrying stream again,
 (Hark, forward — hark!)
We'll find our last year's dream again,
 Where pipes the meadow-lark.
Come, love of mine, earth's fairest thing,
With eyes that shine and lips that sing,
Haste to the ringing call of Spring!
 Hark, forward — hark!

NIGHT SONG

Come, my soul, and to thy fastness
Flee away;
Close the shadowy doors of silence
On the day.

Come, and let all hope and passion
Fall to rest;
Let the sphinx of midnight fold thee
To her breast:

She whose ears no moan nor murmur
Ever reach,
And whose lips are closed to question
And to speech;

She whose eyes are as the brooding
Lights of fate,
And whose silence to thy sorrow
Answers—Wait!

Thou shalt learn in that pure stillness
What thou art—
All the wonder and the wisdom
Of thy heart.

Not in dreams, for they are shadows;
Not in sleep—
That is soulless: but in vision
Clear and deep;

In the rest nor pain nor longing
Put to flight;
In the sweet and cold Nirvana
Of the night.

Learn the power, the calm, the worship
That shall be.
Come, my soul! For in the darkness
Thou art free.

IN A HOSPITAL WARD

This is the hallway to the courts of Death,
Where mournful crowds besiege his inner gate;
Here, prone in piteous rows, they rest and wait,
And measure weary hours with long-drawn
breath.
Ah, house where none for pleasure entereth!
Far from the clamorous cries of love or hate,
Here Pain and Patience dwell in lonely state,
And here the dumb soul learns its *shibboleth*,
Password to unknown regions. Come, my heart,
Steal in, and watch the battle fought and won;
Look into wistful eyes, where no tears start;
And in these silent victories, praised by none,
Mark how the dauntless spirit plays its part,
Though the spent frame be vanquished and un-
done!

AT THE CONCERT: A WAGNER NUMBER

A crash of the drum and cymbals,
A long, keen, wailing cry;
A throb as of wings of mighty things,
That with whirring din sweep by.

They come, with their thunder-chorus,
Vast shapes, of a stronger race;
An alien throng from some star of song
In the undiscovered space.

I thrill to their eager calling,
I shrink from their fierce control;
They have pressed and pried the great doors wide
That were closed to guard my soul.

LOVE'S REFUGE

Love fled from Death on a summer's day,
Lightly trod over fern and flower;
"Ah, Death," he cried, "when the world is gay,
Seek me not, but await thine hour!
I am welcome wherever I go;
Gladness follows my steps," said he;
"For love hath not in the world a foe,
But thee — but thee!"

Love came to Death on a winter's night,
Knocked and cried at the cold, closed door;
"Shelter me, Death, from storm and blight!
Wilt thou forget me forevermore?
Life pursues to a cruel end;
Refuge only is here," said he;
"For Love hath not in the world a friend
But thee — but thee!"

LOVE IS DEAD

Love is dead, they say;
Where is he laid away?
I would see him, stark and fair,
Cut a lock of his shining hair,
Kiss his lips, however cold, —
Poor Love, sweet Love,
Who lived not to grow old.

Love? We laid him here,
On a flower-strewn bier,
Yet he's gone, we know not where.
Lift the pall, — was he ever there?
When his soul is fled away,
His form will never stay.

THE SOUL'S ENDURANCE

The marvel is, that we can bear our part
With such strange courage, and endure so
much;
When Sorrow brands us with her fiery touch,
That we can face her with so high a heart.

That, though with failing, staggering feet we
trace
The blank, unmeasured pathways of the night,
We still move forward, without strength or
sight,
Straight to some fair unknown abiding-place.

Oh, dauntless soul of man! How vast a hope —
Renewed forever — is thy rightful dower;
How fair a presage of delight and power,
When thy life broadens to its destined scope!

THE LION CAGED

For hours, with furtive, forceful tread,
He paces slow, in sad disdain ;
His limbs by formless longings led
That thrill their giant thews like pain.

Or, flinging full his shaggy length,
Fronting the bars, inert he lies ;
The frenzies of his captive strength
Flame up, and darken, in his eyes.

What moves within his soul, who dwelt
Between the naked earth and sky,
Who with his strenuous pulses felt
The swinging sphere in harmony ?

What anguish of his helpless state
Stills his vast bulk to sullen rest ?
Till some blind impulse — fierce, elate —
Strikes like a sting through brain and breast !

Some arrowy gleam of tropic suns,
That quickened once his splendid might,
Through all his troubled being runs,
And floods his yellow eyes with light.

The cold, sweet breath of forest streams,
Wind-blown between the vengeful bars ;
The lusts of spring ; the savage dreams ;
The ranging hunt beneath the stars.

Strange living memories, dumbly voiced,
They rend him as he lies forlorn, —
The strong brute spirit, that rejoiced
In unveiled glories of the morn !

So with his leap the prison shakes;
And as his mighty head he rears,
From his wild bosom hoarsely breaks
The passion of his wasted years.

Then, slowly, as the vision dies,
The narrow walls, with conquering stress,
Constrain him — and once more he lies,
Dull, helpless, stricken, passionless!

Yet who may flout him? Still he shows
A shape of power, as he were free;
And fear still guards him as he goes,
And crowns his ruined majesty.

THE CLOSING YEAR

Now falters to its end a wondrous year,
Crowned with strange lights of glory and of woe,
Splendors of memory, and prophetic glow,
And all that makes life terrible and dear.
The flight of mighty spirits from our sphere
Has quickened all the air. With what stern
bliss
They to whom death could never come amiss
Went forth, and left their rich remembrance here!
Theirs is the history now of star and sun;
Creation's music with their song makes rhyme:
While we, who feel great movements scarce begun,
Hear the deep hours struck out with fateful chime;
Nor rest until the breathless age has won
The hard-wrought guerdons of tumultuous time.

THE VINDICATION

Ye wrong the toiling Age, all ye who say
That Faith's clear cry is heard no more on earth;
That we are left to drug the soul with mirth,
And in life's low fulfilments, day by day,
Close out our weary round. They tell you nay,
Those high sweet souls that weigh not their own worth,
But trust the impulse of diviner birth,
And move straight starward by some secret way.

Still may we find them, saints that toil and sing,
Strong hearts, that bear love's burdens through
the gloom;
And they to whom earth's tenderest laurels cling,
The Nations' martyrs, glorious in their doom,
Who welcomed conquering Death as king greets
king,
And made a royal palace of the tomb.

A NEW FRIENDSHIP

Thy life drew near to mine, all unaware,
Strange as the coming of a star at eve;
Ere the sky darkens, while we yet believe
There is no star in sight,—lo! it is there,
A breathing, trembling light in the still air,
A joy new-made.

So when I met with thee,
Dear friend, true heart, 'twas twilight time
with me;
Much had grown dim that I had once found
fair.
I do not know with what sweet ray of grace
Thy life first touched me, shining through my
tears,
When thy soft hand came stealing to its place
Within my own, and drew me back from fears.
This only do I know,—that in thy face
I found a new light for my coming years.

TO A YOUNG CHILD

Not for that all obey thee
Art thou a king, dear heart ;
But that no fears waylay thee
Nor earthly laws gainsay thee, —
Lord of thy soul thou art.

World's scorn can never fright thee,
World's sorrow make thee pine ;
Nor dark forebodings blight thee,
Nor mocking hopes invite thee ;
Life's perfect Now is thine.

In faith serenely nested,
Thou smil'st when others weep ;
While we, by cares molested,
With heavy hearts unrested,
Are envious of thy sleep ;

Till, when the dark is creeping
O'er life's last troubled day,
We fall, like thee, to sleeping,
And learn, in love's great keeping,
Faith's royal, restful way.

NOCTURNE

How cool, how spacious, how serene the night!
How the great transports and wide destinies
Of that unbounded life to which we tend
Now show themselves in glimpses! Piercing
bright
Those quick looks of the stars between the
boughs,—
Flashes of prophecy. The somber trees
Are massed in denser dark against the void,—
Vast spheres of shadow, where all mysteries
blend,
With subtle movement and with deep-drawn
sighing.

My soul, thou sleeping Titan, prostrate lying,
Lulled by the day,— now stir as if to rise;
Push back the hair from slumber-weighted
brows,
And gaze awhile, with bright bewildered eyes,
Upon thy kindred stars. O blinding gleam!
O quickening breath of Night that clears my
dream!

Love, in a prison-house thou holdest me
Of narrow longings and entralling woe.
For once I'll say: Unbar, and let me go,
To breathe a larger air! This hour sets free
The slave of light and time — but yet to-morrow
I would steal back to the old love and sorrow!

A GUARDIAN SPIRIT

The years affright me, love, for in their deeps
 May lurk an ambushed woe — the loss of you!
Grief cannot wound me, while your guard is
 true;
And while your soul keeps watch, dark memory
 sleeps.
But, like a ghost, along my pathway creeps
 That dream of evil which you hold at bay.
What shall befall me, should you slip away
From my life's clasp? — The sudden terror leaps
 Upon my heart, as some wild thing alight,
Whose clutch is death! — Then were my soul
 laid bare
To all the sullen hosts of storm and blight.
But while I shrink from that unnamed despair,
Your tender presence steals upon my sight,
 With blue eyes shining through the shadowed
air.

THE NIGHT FLOWER

The sun hath many worshippers: all day
 What fair great flowers send incense to his
 shrine,
 Forever turning toward his face divine,
And drooping straight when he withdraws his
 ray!
What delicate morning blooms unfold and sway
 Upon their tender stems for his delight,
 But shrinking from the first cold touch of
 night,
Upon their soft breasts fold their dreams away!
 So many lovers hath the royal sun:
 But night, the sad, fair sibyl, hath but one.

One pure and wondrous flower is fain to know
The lore of her stern lips and brooding eyes,
And, stung by that strange passion, opens slow,
Shines in white fire of ecstasy, and dies.

WITHOUT INTENT

This is a truth, though it be strange to hear :
One may shed light upon another's way
All unaware. Some life-inspiring ray
May shine from one who never held us dear ;
And some slight hand deliver us from fear,
Not knowingly stretched toward us. What
we see,
Or feel, or dream another's life to be —
When by our love we bring its influence near —
Marks on the soul its secret, deep impress.
Hope comes, unrecognized, and scarce desired,
From some mere touch of truth or tenderness.
So, without knowledge, heart by heart is fired ;
And yonder laughing child does more to bless
Than priest or prophet consciously inspired.

NEW YORK

The air and the wave enfold her,
River and sky and sea ;
Cradled in light they hold her,
Circled in mystery.
With a tender touch they drape her,
At morning and eventide,
In a film of jewelled vapor
Fit for a royal bride.

The stars of the night have crowned her,
In pageant full o'erhead ;

And far, to the verge around her,
 Her zone of light is spread.
The subject seas have brought her
 All that their tides control;
And the joy of the breathing water
 Quickens her inmost soul.

Where is her peer in splendor?
 Whom shall she own as lord?
Richest that earth can render
 Down at her feet is poured.
Yet can no glories win her
 To deep and pure repose,
For the strong, proud heart within her
 Aches with a thousand woes.

She who was made to cherish
 Toiler and waif and slave,
Weeps that her children perish,
 Spoiled of the hope she gave.
Mourns for her freedom's dower,
 Lost in the strife for gold,
While the sword of her sovereign power
 Drops from her listless hold.

Yet, as the tides sweep round her,
 Her mighty pulses thrill,
And the chains that long have bound her
 Shake with her wakening will.
Slowly the links are broken;
 Shall not she bear at last
Only the solemn token
 Of pain and thraldom past?

The air and the wave enfold her,
 River and sky and sea;

Lo! in a dream behold her,
Crowned as she yet may be!
Still is she freedom's daughter,
Noble in joy or dole;
And the life of the great glad water
Quickens her inmost soul.

THE CITY

Beside the shining water, serene she sits in state,
Fronting the noonday splendor, keeping the New
World's gate;
Mother of hope and promise, city of light and
dream,
Smiling in beauty's triumph, changed with each
changing gleam;
Beside the shining water, she draws her veil of
mist
Over her flashing jewels, opal and amethyst.

In twilight's purple vapor, in morning's rain of
gold,
Forever round her island walls the glittering
tides are rolled;
And the great sea's utmost secret, the river's
tenderer song,
Sound through her mingled voices the changeful
year along.
Like doves to her bosom flocking, the proud,
swift ships come home,
Tracking her glassy waters with arabesques of
foam;
And to her heart's strong throbbing a thousand
hearts keep time,
Where far across the bay's clear stretch is borne
her silver chime.

Indrawn, the sullen shadows from lapping waters
creep,
Cold, through the teeming channels where her
life's stream runs deep ;
Indrawn, her breath comes faintly, in broken sob
and moan,
Slow, through her up-toss'd thunders — a secret
monotone
Sounding from dark recesses, the voice of want
and wrong,
Till her mad, sweet, varied music seems but a
siren song ;
And all her noonday glories, her midnight crown
of flame,
Seem but the false regalia of anguish and of
shame ;
While o'er that aching tumult she draws her veil
of mist,
With the mocking gleam of jewels, opal and
amethyst.

Still by the shining water, serene she sits in state,
Fronting the noonday splendor, keeping the New
World's gate ;
And still her sun-wrought signals flash from her
lifted spires,
And still beneath the lights of heaven she burns
her midnight fires,
And the proud, swift ships flock homeward, and
hope-drawn hearts beat time,
As far across the bay's clear stretch is borne her
silver chime.

THE PLANTING OF A TREE

Arbor Day Song

Would'st thou upbuild a home where sweet wild
lives are nested,
Glad with the sound of song, quick with the
flash of wings,—
Where the soft brooks may rock, warm-housed
and unmolested,
Deep in the leafy nooks, through all the
changeful Springs?

Or would'st thou rear an arch of noblest grace
and splendor,
Lifted in air and light, shaped by the sun and
storm,
Moved by the wandering wind, swayed by each
influence tender,
Yet by the hand of life moulded to steadfast
form?

Would'st thou make day more fair, and night
more rich and holy,
Winter more keenly bright, and summer's self
more dear,—
Grant the sweet earth a gift, deep rooted, ripen-
ing slowly,
Add to the sum of joys that bless the rounded
year?

Go, then, and plant a tree, lovely in sun and
shadow,
Gracious in every kind — maple and oak and
pine.

Peace of the forest glade, wealth of the fruitful
meadow,
Blessings of dew and shade, hereafter shall be
thine!

For though thou never see the joy thy hand hath
granted,
Those who shall follow thee thy generous boon
may share.
Thou shalt be Nature's child, who her best fruit
hath planted,
And each of many a spring shall find thy gift
more fair.

THE JOY OF THE HOUR

I crossed on the windy river,
And my heart was cold with care;
My life seemed mocked by the laughing day,
Tost on the wide wild air.

But the sun was hot on the river,
The small waves raced and flew;
And the gulls beat in from the open sea,
And sailed abroad in the blue.

And I gave myself to the hour,
To its sensuous brave delight,
To the promise voiced by the swinging wave,
The wind, and the gray gulls' flight.

And I was not mocked by the river,
Nor scorned by the light and air;
They gave me their life, their dream, their hope,
Because I had found them fair.

PRESS SONG

They whir and clash, through the nights and
days,

The magical looms of thought;
And in and out, through a thousand ways,
The flashing threads are brought.
Their swift purveyors part and meet,
On rail and ship, on mart and street,
With tireless brain, with hurrying feet,
As the endless web is wrought.

They may not pause when the sun is high,
Nor rest when the light is low;
For while men live, and act, and die,
The word flies to and fro.

It leaps the sea, it spans the plain;
On throbbing wire and mighty chain,
It runs like fire from main to main,
That the world may see and know.

While all men sleep, they whir and clash,
The terrible looms of light;
On eyes that wake shall the message flash,
From far beyond the night;
And songs in the under world begun
Shall touch our lips ere day is done;
For space is nought, and the earth's at one,
Linked by the word's swift flight.

Man calls to man, and not in vain,
The cry to his ear is brought;
All love, and labor, and hope, and pain
Into each soul is wrought.
Work on, ye presses, at life's behest,
For light far spread, and for wrong redressed:
Till time is ended, ye may not rest,
Ye marvelous looms of thought!

THE SOUL'S FLIGHT

Steaming over wild seas, rattling over rails,
We have brought, to conquer space, power that
never fails;
We have trapped the lightning, harnessed it to
go
Down the world and up again, hurtling to and
fro.

This has been our messenger; this shall be our
steed;
We have set the rein and curb on its fiery speed;
Up the world and down again, roving at our will,
Yet however swift we go, we are 'prisoned still!

Moving mid the splendor of all earthly things,
We are sick for heights of air, we are mad for
wings!
Shall the lightning bear us yet to the very door
Where the storm and sullen cloud hold its force
in store?

Land and sea are small to us; wider risk we'd
brave;
Up the winds and down again — that is what we
crave!
Yet the earth would claim again all our vaunted
powers;
What were lightning wings to us, since they are
not ours?

Though we've stolen magic fires, though we've
set their course,
Yet there's something stirring us — a wilder,
deeper force;

All the powers that we have known, wind and
wire and steam,
Fail to move the folded wings that flutter in our
dream.

Till the hour when they are spread, we shall sigh
and lack;
Though we conquer space and time, earth will
draw us back;
Though we run, and though we fly, though at
last we fare
Round the world and over it, through the circling
air.

We have come from spaces vast, where the day
is born,
Where the mighty spheres are forged in the fires
of morn;
Thither shall we flee away, as a darting flame,
Back to God, and home again — home to whence
we came.

A CHILD MUSICIAN

What is the secret of thy song,
 Oh tender Ariel?
What visions to thine eyes belong?
 What tuneful spirits dwell
In the pure twilight of thy soul,
Owning thy slender hand's control?

What know'st thou that we cannot know
 Who only hear thy dreams?
When quickening winds of Springtide blow
 Across the ruffled streams,
What door in Heaven is opened, whence
Far voices greet thy finer sense?

What angel taught thee, when life's ray
 Shone faint upon thine eyes,
Strange meanings of the night and day,
 Of shadow and sunrise,
And all the stress man's spirit feels,
In longing for what God reveals?

Oh wonder! that thy childish years,
 Sweet deep-eyed Ariel,
Are burdened with the dreams, the tears,
 The joy no word may tell,
The pain, the passion and the strife,
That mingle in our song of life.

Our music bears our manhood's woe;
 How didst thou learn the strain?
Or dost thou only dimly know
 What thy strange skill makes plain,
And blindly trace the edge of night
With small soft fingers tipped with light?

No thought thy secret may surprise,
Nor read thy life aright;
We meet thy pure unfathomed eyes,
Thy smiles of deep delight,
And see upon thy flower-like face
God's seal of mystery and of grace.

As tones of Ocean's song are heard
Within the fragile shell,
Thy spirit vibrates to God's word,
Oh tender Ariel!
His whisper in thy soul hath wrought
A faint, fine echo of His thought.

THE GREATER WAY

Hast thou been strong? Thou shalt be left
Of strength bereft!
Hast thou been young, and glad and gay?
Youth flits away!
Hast thou been brave, and just, and kind?
Then to thy mind
Shall the great forces bend their power,
Making all life thy dower.

A ROOM

This is the room: the void bleak space
Where set the star of her sweet face,
Within it, life's persistent cry
Drops to the echo of a sigh;
Its few poor treasures shrink and pine
Like wreaths on some forsaken shrine;
And on its melancholy walls
Coldly the morning radiance falls.
Death's shadow drove its soul of light
Far upward, beyond dream of sight,
And left it here, in lonely state,—
Bare, silent, dim, disconsolate.

FANTASIA

I

Allegro

Your face is like music !
 I fancy a song,
On a clear twilight river,
Between the dark shores,—
 Like tones in a dream—
 Dropped softly along,
Where the pure lilies quiver
 To the touch of the oars ;
And tenderly, stilly,
 I see your eyes gleam,—
Stars over and under,
 In sky and in stream.
And this is the wonder —
 Now your face is the lily,
 And now 'tis the song !

II

Andante

Your face is like music. Its loveliness calls
 To my heart like the echo of melodies rare.
Like the sweep of a cadence the pure outline
 falls ;
And the eyes and the lips, both so tenderly
 fair,
And the cheek, with its soft mystic pallor and
 glow,
Like the first fairy flushing of dawn upon
 snow,—

All touch me like clear thronging chords,
But none puts the dear song in words;

For the grace
That it brings
Is the grace of a silence
That sings!
For your face
Is like music.

A MAY MAIDEN

She is fashioned quaintly,
Very small and fair;
Sunny lights shine faintly
Through her floating hair.
Light her form and slender,
As a swallow's wing,
And her face is tender
As a thought of Spring.

Under lashes shady,
Soft her eyes and bright;
She's a tiny lady,
Made for our delight;
If she says, "I love you,"
All your heart must sing;
And her kisses move you,
Like the touch of Spring.

THE PINE TREE

Here in the valley town,
Where the west winds, sweeping down,
Are tamed in their mighty courses,
Whirling, with scattered forces ;
Here, where the houses stand,
Each in its garden trim —
Where the sweet familiar blooms,
Lilac and box and rose,
Send out the old perfumes,
May after May —
Here, by the beaten way,
A strong old pine-tree grows,
Child of a barren land,
Sturdy and tall and grim,
And gaunt of limb.
Summer and winter and spring,
Through all their varied range,
To its level boughs can bring
No dream of change.
And I hear as I pass along
That immemorial song,
Which the forests chant to the sea,
From great crags, lone and far,
And the sea cries back again,
In deep antiphonal strain
Of solemn jubilee,
Voicing the bygone ages,
And the ages yet to be.

In slow, strong monotone,
It sounds alone ;
The hum of the vibrant wings
Of the soul of things ;
The boom of the distant chime
Of greater time :

Strange as the voice that dwells
In caves that the tide draws under,
Whose awful and endless thunder
Is echoed in tiniest shells,
With far, faint sigh, —
Or flung from the gleaming walls
Of giant waterfalls, —
A call — a question —
A ceaseless cry,
And its quiet, tender, unending, slow reply.

O priestly, solemn pine,
Not all who pass can hear
That wind-wrought song of thine !
For life rings loud in the ear,
And the air is thrilled and stirred
With flutter of leaf and bird,
With clamor of toilsome day —
Now mellow and far away —
Now swelling, with tramp of feet,
In the village street.

But I keep, as my steps go on —
Stilled to a measured calm —
The sound of your changeless psalm,
The verse and the antiphon.
And it brings the sense to me
Of great half-spheres of sea,
And stretches of boundless air,
To my flying thought spread bare ;
And of forests old,
On measureless mountainsides,
Where wild life flits and hides,
And the cosmic hymn
Is murmured in deep recesses,
With utterance manifold.

But the word is one!
Calling from forest and sea,
Breathed from this stern old tree,
That stands, amid crowding blooms, alone.
It is worship and strength to me,
It is deeper than mystery,
For the message is "Patience — patience!"
The theme is Eternity.

IN QUIETNESS AND IN CONFIDENCE

How slowly fades the rose-light in the west!
How gently moves the earth to meet the night,
Ent'ring the darkness as a place of rest,
And taking quiet leave of day's delight!

Oh, that our hearts could thus relinquish joy!
Oh, that our hours of darkness thus might be
As tranquil shades, that veil but not destroy
The deathless Daylight of Eternity!

Lord! give us grace that we may so enthrall
Our heart's desires, that, through the night
and day,
We thus move forward at Thy loving call —
Swift without haste, and calm without delay!

ON THE RIVER: AN IMPRESSION

A river of silver and azure,
With gliding ships afloat;
On the farther shore a city,
Golden, serene, remote;
With one fair dome up-rising,
Dim through the tender mist,
Like a stately, pearl-built palace,
With tracings of amethyst.
A boat, with proud sails swelling;
Swift as a dream, she slips
Through vistas of liquid glory,
Between the larger ships;
And whither else is she headed,
And whither could she fare,
But straight to the mystical palace,
To the foot of its shining stair?

Whatever the crew that boards her,
Or the freight she bears away,
She was set afloat as a pleasure-boat,
To carry my soul to-day!
For me are her blue sails spreading,
For me was she launched and manned;
Though I journey away from the river,
Through the slowly darkening land.
She never will reach the palace,
Her sails will never be furled;
She will always lie 'neath a reddening sky,
On the verge of a wonder-world;
And the palace shall vanish never;
And the low sun shall not fail
To light forever the silver river,
The dome, the sky, the sail.

A CHORISTER

My tall white lily, with uplifted face
Set in a carved nook of the holy place,
From stillness and dim glories gathering
grace,—

What thoughts of Heav'n wait on thy gentle
guise,
The tender mystery of thy musing eyes,
Thine unimpassioned lips, shaped angel-wise?

From thy clear-tinted face, serenely fair,
A tranquil influence mingles with my prayer,
Subtly as breath of incense on the air.

No cares of earth can touch thee, till God please ;
He keeps thee as He keeps His flowers and trees,
Rooted in calm, and spher'd in golden ease.

And, as a bird breaks from the leafy height,
Thy winged voice uprises, clear and light,
Just stirring thy pure stillness with its flight.

Mere human childhood though thy life may be,
Here in God's place and time, thou art to me
His symbol-flower of peace and purity.

For He Who stood once in a grassy space,
And marked the lilies growing in their place,
Sends us anew their message in thy face.

Thy calm white beauty was not given in vain ;
So may He guard thee — not from love or
pain —
But from all earthly dreams that leave a stain.

A DISCIPLE

Within the little space of two blue eyes,
My soul, long gazing, can see more of heaven
Than when, on days of storm, a cloud is riven
Far up the zenith, showing, as it flies,
Pure glimpses of unfathomable skies.

— What can *I* teach thee, looking up to me,
Dear, in thine angel-guarded purity,
And that great innocence that makes thee wise?
If thou could'st know the truth — meek as thou
art —

My very soul is lying at thy feet,
Searched to its troubled depths by rays that dart
From those clear eyes, so dreadful, yet so sweet!
Oh, teach thou *me*, that so my darkened heart
May worthier grow thy gaze, and God's, to meet.

A CHILD I KNEW

There was a face as lovely to the sight
As some wild vision on the wave afloat,
Some water fairy smiling to the light
Close by the shadow of a drifting boat.
The eyes — pure spirit, colored by the sky;
The lips made sweet to drop light kisses on:
That was a child I knew. But years went by,
And he is gone!

There was a hand, so small, so slim, so warm —
No clasp so loving ever folded mine;
A quick, brown, bird-like head; a slender form;
A child's fine heart-beats, with a love as fine.
Alas! in manhood souls may be defiled,
And love may falter as the years go on.
It was not Death, but Life, that took the child,
And he is gone!

ON THE PLAINS

World-wide space, and the sky above ;
Open light, that no shadow mars ;
Earth is a star with the other stars,
And heaven is near enough to love.

Waves of green on an endless sea ;
Streaks of bloom, that are tossed like foam ;
The sun and the wind are here at home,
And here the cloud and the storm go free.

Royal night, and the veil withdrawn,
Blinding glitter of starry spears ;
Changing glory of days and years,
Perfect splendor of dusk and dawn.

Earth's clear breast, and the sky above ;
World-wide spaces, and full, free breath ;
Here life looks in the eyes of death,
And God is near, for the soul to love.

“TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”

One Hand alone, outstretched, unfaltering,
Can reach us, where our broken lives were lost ;
Ye, who stand safe, may scorn us as we cling ;
But oh ; the Hand is warm,—and we were
lost !

A SONG OF KINDRED

Hark! how the strong seas shout
 To the pines on the mountainside:
“Sing, brothers, sing! for the winds are out,
 And the path of their flight is wide!
 We leap, at flood of the tide,
 To the base of your rooted rock.
Feel you the thrill as the deep caves fill?
 Hear you the breakers’ shock?
 Hail, brothers, hail!
Send your song on the western gale.
 Loud is the wind in every tree,
But you alone can voice the tone
 Of the full-throated sea.
From you alone can our echoes ring;
Sing, brothers, sing!”

Hark! how the great pines cry
 From the inland forest places,
Sending the mountain-land’s reply
 Out to the wild sea-spaces,
 Where the mad wave swells and races
 Under the tide-wind’s hand.
“Hail, all hail! We swing to the gale,
 And shrill to your brave command.
Rock, rock, and chime!
Back we fling your iterant rhyme,
 In a rush of harmony!
 Loud is the wind in every tree,
But we alone can harp the tone
 Of the deep-breasted sea.
From us alone can your echoes fall!
Call, brothers, call!”

LAZARUS

To what fair-ordered kingdom hadst thou sped?
Thou pure, great spirit of the righteous dead!
Through what vast shadowy vista didst thou
trace

The archways of that radiant dwelling-place?
From what star-centre came the full-orbed light
That flamed at length, unshadowed, on thy sight?
And when that Kingly summons sounded clear,
Through what rare ether did it find thine ear?
What guide hadst thou in that amazed flight
Thus swiftly circling backward toward the night?
With what strange pang did thine enfranchised
soul

Renounce the glories of its late-won goal,
And stoop once more beneath the doors of doom,
Back, through the clinging thraldom of the
tomb,

Back to the sordid day, the toil, the tears,
The unwept sorrows of long human years?
Who reads thy riddle, since thy speech is sealed?
No soul may guess what thine leaves unrevealed.
Yet can I dream of looking in those eyes—
In whose clear depth life's utmost mystery lies,
And, for one answer only pleading sore:
“What is death's guerdon? Tell me this—no
more.

And having known what to thy soul was best,
How canst thou live, and wait, in perfect rest?”
I hear thee say, “In all that realm of space
I found no other glory than His Face,
Nor can I lose that light in any sphere;
His was the summons — and He met me here!”

OUT AT SEA

Unnumbered waves, and unshadowed light!
Limitless glory, that fades to sight
With the dusk, and the star-inspired night!

Through circles of light and dark she slips,
Under the arch-ways of dawn she dips,
The one most precious of all the ships.

Whelmed in azure, 'twixt gulf and space,
She holds in her narrow housing-place
A little world, with its life and grace;

A pearl held loosely in God's strong hand,
A sphere whose course is at His command,
Alone with Him, till she find the land.

My soul is drawn in her gleaming trail;
With her I harbor — with her I fail.
Oh, ship most precious of all that sail!

I know no life, and I find no light,
Save in the track of her wave-bound flight.
— I feel her strain to the winds at night!

For there, in her narrow housing-place
Is held awhile between gulf and space
The One whose soul is my star of grace.

THE CHILDREN

They take my very heart — I know not how —
So shyly lifting up their deep sweet eyes,
Pure as the morning star in virgin skies,
'Neath the soft hair and white unshadowed brow.

I would not that the darkness of the world
Should cloud those tender lights. I would instead
That mine own eyes should weep, and o'er my head
The wings of storm and sorrow be unfurled.

I fain would stand before each little breast,
A loving shield — but since this may not be,
I long instead that they should turn to me,
As birds that flutter gladly to the nest,
After the first weak flight; sure, ever sure,
To find the mother-heart, and rest secure!

OCTOBER

Came a wild queen up the glens, whence the summer had fled —
Beautiful, wonder-eyed, strong-hearted, glowing October!
Brightly with colors of flame was her vesture spread;
All the rich spoils of the year had been gathered to robe her.

Life in her cheek flushed and throbbed, burning fitfully clear,
Life in her eyes lit their depths with a passionate splendor;

Forth she came singing, with voice full of mystical cheer,

Forth she came singing a bride-song, exultant and tender.

Lustrous October (I said), if thou com'st as a bride,

Yet if thou com'st as a queen, sure thy bridegroom is royal!

"Great is the monarch," she said, "who shall stand at my side,

None is so fair in mine eyes — none so steadfast and loyal."

Who is thy king and thy bridegroom, fair queen of the Year?

Beautiful, wonder-eyed, strong-hearted, golden October!

"Death is my bridegroom!" she said, "and his bride is so dear,

All the rich spoils of the summer are gathered to robe her.

"Death is my bridegroom," she said, "and his grace shall be mine.

See'st thou my vesture of flame? It is donned for his glory;

Gentle the touch of his hand, and his eyes are divine!

Only his nearest can list to his marvelous story.

"Forth he will lead me, to lands beyond shadow and strife;

Bright are the halls of his palace, though dark be its portal.

There he is known not as Death — but his name is called *Life*!

Life shall be mine, and through me is the Year made immortal."

THE SONG OF MARGARET

Noblest of maidens, Margaret,
Outside Love's garden lingereth ;
"My time," she sigheth, "is not yet,—
 My time for either love or death :
'Twixt star and star my sphere is set ;
 The light from each is faint," she saith.

"Here in Love's garden on my left,
 All wealth of fruit and flower is seen,
The amber peach, with ripeness cleft,
 The blue grape and the nectarine,
The white rose, of her love bereft,
 The dark-red rose that plays the queen.

"While on my right, past wood and lea,
 The pale horizon dimly glows :
Its light upon the silver sea
 A soul of color doth disclose,
As if its subtle flame might be
 The fire that kindles in the rose."

The noble maiden, Margaret,
Walks in white garments, like a bride ;
On barren ways her steps are set,
Sweet mysteries dwell on either side ;
Fair are the garden-glooms, and yet
 Her eyes o'erlook the distance wide.

Which way at last her course shall tend,
Fain would she know ere day is old,
The garden-paths have many a bend,
White robes are soiled by wet brown mold,
And where those shadowy windings end,
 That is a secret still untold !

Out on the far horizon's rim
There dwells a light that never dies ;
Faint sounds, as from an angel's hymn,
In soft strange echoings fall and rise.
The path between is wild and dim,
But leads it not to Paradise ?

Noblest of maidens, Margaret,
Still lingereth on the barren way :
"My time," she sigheth, "is not yet !"
The larger lot, the more delay.
'Twixt star and star my sphere is set, —
Ah ! which shall be my Star of Day ?"

LET ME CRY HOPE

Let me cry Hope, though I myself despair !
Soul, if for thee the deep abysses yawn,
Hold thou thy torch above the darkness there,
That souls far off may hail it as the dawn ;
Since, though the light may cheat their craving
eyes,
For one dear hour 'twill make their pathway fair ;
And, ere it sink, for them the Sun may rise.
Let me cry Hope, though I myself despair !

PORTRAIT OF A CHILD

His little face is so pure, so fine,—
 Fine as a cameo, pale and quaint
As an elf of the wood ; the slender line
 Of the eyebrow but slightly arched, and faint ;
 But the blue eyes under —
 A shining wonder ! —
Clear as a still lake, deeps on deeps,
 Holding the sunlight, they gleam upon you ;
The soul beneath them never sleeps ;
 It smiles from the blue, and lo ! it has won you.

The face is slight, and shaped like a heart ;
 It hints of song, like a violin ;
Sloping in delicate lines, that start
 From the broad clear brow to the tiny chin.
 Formed for gladness, —
 Yet touched with sadness, —
Oh, dear child-face ! where the shadow sleeps
 (The shade of a shadow, that comes and goes)
 Down the tender cheek, with its paling rose,
To the full pure curve of the perfect lips.

Not the face of an angel, this, —
 But the face of a human child, made sweet
To hold between loving hands, and kiss ;
 A wistful face, that your eyes should greet
 With looks as tender
 As love can render
To all that love in the world holds best ;
 A face for grieving, for wonder and hope,
Through whose strange clearness the soul hath
 scope
To shine, in its spotless childhood blest.

CHILD-LIFE PASSES AWAY

As the delicate opened flower,
As love's most ideal hour,
As the first pure flush of the day —
Child-life passes away.

Do we ever dream of this —
What love, what beauty and bliss,
What tender glory — are flown,
When we say, "The children are grown?"

That exquisite fleeting hint
Of the Perfect in form and tint, —
The rose leaf cheek, and the eyes
That look on us angel-wise;

The flower-shaped faces dear,
Tender and bright and clear;
The warm pure lips; and the hair,
So softly-ringed and fair;

The nestling, clinging form,
Slim and throbbing and warm:
The dash and power of the boy —
The sweetness, the wonder and joy.

We love them to-day and to-night,
But they slowly change in our sight;
And we know on some darker day,
Child beauty will pass away.

The wave of loveliness grows,
And swells, and passes. — and flows
Away into some new range
Of rise and falling and change.

Yet beauty that changes and flows
Still lives in the soul, and grows ;
The touch may be fairy-fine,
But the impress left is divine.

BEFORE THE DAWN

Just before the dawn the leaves begin to stir,—
Just before the dawn,— with a soft and wistful sound ;
The shrill small things with wiry wings have ceased their restless whir,
The voices of night are hushed, and the stillness closes round.

Just before the dawn there's a tremble in the air ;
The silence still is deep, but it seems to pause and hark ;
The earth is sighing in her sleep (be her dreams sad or fair?),
And a creeping wind that feels its way goes rustling through the dark.

Just before the dawn I am waking from my sleep,
The hush is on my soul, and it resteth without thought ;
Or perchance in one great Thought it lies whelmed, as in the deep,
And waits in an awful calm till the wonder of Day be wrought.

O'er the dim half-globe stealeth a wan white light ;
Strange as the smile of the dead, it groweth unaware ;

And, touched by a dream that hovers between
the day and night,
All things wake and whisper; life breathes
low in the air.

All things wake and whisper, still with a sense of
doubt;
Light leaves tremble with hope; here and
there twitters a bird:
Soon will the moment come when the flush of
the east breaks out,
When the wide world laughs and arises, and
the chorus of song is heard!

I, too, wait for the morn, lying watchful and still;
But the calm of my soul is shattered in frag-
ments of thought and dream;
Just as, a moment later, when the sun looks over
the hill,
The clear white light will be broken in shadow
and golden gleam.

But later, and later still, when broad bright day
is here,
And all life's voices sound, my soul will still
be dumb;
My soul will still be waiting, in wonder and hope
and fear,—
For *her* light is the light of dawn, and her Day
is yet to come.

CHICAGO—IN 1893

IN PREPARATION FOR THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

The blue lake ripples to her feet,
The wind is in her hair;
She stands, a maiden wild and sweet,
With sinewy form and fair.

No stress of age her hope restrains,
Nor checks its high emprise;
The blood of youth is in her veins,
Youth's challenge in her eyes.

She seized, with movement swift as light,
The hour's most precious spoil;
Now, glowing with her promise bright,
Her strength makes joy of toil.

With dextrous hand, with dauntless will,
Her pearl-white towers she rears,
The memory of whose grace shall thrill
The illimitable years.

O'er leagues of waste, in sun and storm,
Their proud pure domes shall gleam,
The substance, wrought in noblest form,
Or Art's imperial dream.

Here shall she stand, the Old World's bride,
Crowned with the Age's dower;
Toward her shall set the abounding tide
Of life's full pomp and power.

She hears the nations' coming tread,
 The rushing of the ships,
And waits, with queenly hands outspread,
 And welcome on her lips.

The races, 'neath her generous sway,
 Shall spread their splendid mart;
And here, for one brief perfect day,
 Shall beat the world's great heart.

IN DEAR BOHEMIA

(World's Fair, September, 1893.)

This is dear Bohemia's best,—

At the Fair in sunny weather,
Meeting throngs from East and West
Stream through pleasant ways together!

All the glorious doorways frame
Eager, wondering, happy faces;
Care forgets her very name;
Pride forgets her idle graces.

Gray old Earth renews her youth,
Dancing forth to pipe and tabor;
Every word seems gracious truth,
Every man a kindly neighbor.

Never sunshine fell like this,
Gleaming through the carven spaces;
Never hearts were tuned to bliss
In such fair idyllic places;

Never water shone so blue,
Glassing dreams of towered splendor;
Never bells so clear and true
Filled the air with chiming tender.

Room for all, and joy for each,—
This is dear Bohemia's pleasure.
Here's the school where nations teach,
And the World gives forth her treasure.

Shaking out with reckless hand
All the plenteous wealth of ages,
And, at Art's divine command,
Opening Beauty's precious pages.

Darling city of delight,
Proud Columbia's fairy daughter!
Thou must vanish from our sight,
Like a mirage of the water;

But thy gladness shall be ours,
To inspire our life's endeavor,
And the gleam of thy white towers
Light our happiest dreams forever.

CHICAGO AT REST — 1894

Fair Genius of the Lake, sit thou and rest;
Thy brow still crowned, thy glorious limbs
supine,
While yet thine eyes with musing rapture
shine,
And the deep breaths of triumph swell thy breast.

Look out upon the wave; thy work is done!
The mighty nations summoned at thy call
Clasp hands and part; thy glittering pageants
fall;
This was thy golden hour: its sands have run.

Yet shall the glory of that hour be thine
While the world stands: for this — that thou
hast cared
First for supremest beauty, and hast dared
Transform earth's labor with its ray divine.

Now peace be with thee, who hast wrought so
well!
And from far east and west this hope shall be
Sent for thy future blessing: That on thee
God's smile of beauty may forever dwell!

IN A CORN-FIELD

The corn has so much to say!
It tells with a gay delight
The gossip of golden day,
 The dream of the tender night.
The sunny slopes run sweet
 To the edge of the woodland shadows,
Where the idle, laughing streams repeat
 The talk of the happy meadows.

But the trees that lean above
 Have deeper thoughts to measure;
They whisper of home and love,
 And hold their own life's treasure;
They breathe in the sun-filled space;
 Rooted in calm they stand,
Granting the birds a nesting-place,
 Blessing the quiet land.

And the hills their secrets hold,
 Where brooding clouds hang over;
There the soft winds unfold
 Glad thoughts that few discover.
O whispering corn, be still!
 My heart is vainly trying
To hear, through all your rustling thrill,
 The deep tones underlying.

Ah, sweet escaping song!
 Mine ears can ne'er compel it,
But the little flower I bring along
 Smiles up, and tries to tell it!

DEATH'S WAY

Death had his way with her at last;
How sweet his way I had not known
Until her pain and grief were past,
And she was all his own.

I had not dreamed how he could bless,
Until I saw how still and sweet
She lay there in her loveliness,
Content from head to feet.

The smile was sweet upon her lips,
As if her thoughts were glad and wise;
And sweeter for their light's eclipse
The pure lids of her eyes.

Her hair lay in a silver cloud
About her face on either side;
All queenly white, dark-lashed, dark-browed,
She slept in gentle pride.

I crossed soft laces on her breast,
With loving touches lingering;
And on the worn hand, laid at rest,
I left her wedding-ring.

I kissed her, brow and breast and hair;
Then, since I knew how Death could bless,
I left her, trusting, to his care,
In all her loveliness.

Songs of War

THE SONG OF THE GUNNER

She lies within her bracings, with her muzzle out
to sea,

She is sleeping, darkly sleeping, in the sun;
She is waiting for the fiery touch that sets her
thunders free,

For the reckoning when her savage rest is
done.

Oh, my lady, oh, my pet!

I shall hear your music yet,
When the foe shall set his broadside to my gun!

As I stroke her iron shoulder, heaving with the
heaving deck,

From her throat a hollow murmur seems to
start;

As I whisper, as I listen, with my arm upon her
neck,

Do I hear a sullen throbbing from her heart?
Oh, my beauty, my delight!

When you speak, by day or night,
Earth from heaven — soul from body — strain
apart.

Watching mutely through the midnight, watch-
ing warily through the day,

While a brooding blackness veils her eye of
fire,

As the tiger, crouching dumbly, waits to seize the
gliding prey,

Holding leashed the secret force of his desire,
So she lingers, set to stand

To the motion of my hand,

Till my summons wakes the tempest of her ire.

When the call shall sound to action she shall
tremble in her greed;
She shall know me, for her heart and mine are
one!
I shall loose her rocking thunders, I shall fit the
bolts that speed,
Straight to rend, and strong to shatter, swift
to stun;
All her mighty thews shall thrill
To the passion of my will,
And my soul shall send the message of my
gun!

Still she lies within her bracings, with her muzzle
out to sea;
And I stroke her till her steely shoulders shine;
And she slumbers without token of the fury that
shall be
When the foe shall set his broadside on her
line.
Oh, my lady, my delight!
When I swing you round to sight,
Death shall follow, and your triumph shall be
mine!

THE WAR CLOUD, 1898

On the dark horizon line
Muster the clouds of war;
And a moan that's pressed from the sea's wild
breast
Rolls upward from the shore.

Swift runs the flaming sign—
The lightning bolt of wrath—
A nation's ire, that speeds like fire,
With ravage in its path.

Where is the power now,
Mighty to rule or stay
The gleam abhorred of the hurtling sword,
Or the blast that darkens day?

When shall the awful vow
That binds the soul to death
Be all fulfilled, and the last blood spilled,
And the victors stand for breath?

God of unnumbered hosts!
Guide Thou our wrath and power,
That the steadfast light of law and right
Shine through our fateful hour.

That when our swelling boasts
Drop to a dirge of woe,
For brave hearts deep in their dreamless sleep,
In the cold sea depths below.

We own not then the shame
Of fierce, unmastered pride,
That offered life for a needless strife,
Or the hand of peace denied.

But know that in Thy name —
God of our souls' desire! —
For love, for truth, and for deepest ruth,
We loosed the avenging fire.

A MOTHER OF '98

My gallant love goes out to-day,
With drums and bugles sounding gay;
I smile to cheer him on his way —
Smile back, my heart, to me!

The flags are glittering in the light;
Is it their stars that blind my sight?
God, hold my tears until to-night—
Then set their fountains free!

He takes with him the light of May;
Alas! it seems but yesterday
He was a bright-haired child at play,
With eyes that knew no fear;
Blue eyes — true eyes! I see them shine
Far down, along the waving line —
Now meet them bravely, eyes of mine!
Good cheer, my love, good cheer!

Oh, mother-hearts, that dare not break!
That feel the stress, the long, long ache,
The tears that burn, the eyes that wake,
For these our cherished ones —
And ye — true hearts — not called to bear
Such pain and peril, for your share —
Oh, lift with me the pleading prayer,
God save our gallant sons!

BALLAD OF THE ROUGH RIDERS

We heard the sound of galloping feet,
It struck to the nation's soul;
In the far South-west we heard them beat;
Their echoes swept through the city street,
With a rhythmic thunder-roll.
Forward swing, forward swing,
Strong and light as an eagle's wing,
For the flag.

These are they who have heard the call
Of a voice their spirits knew ;
They who follow, to fight or fall,
One who is bravest and best of all
To the young, the swift, the true.
Forward swing, forward swing,
Each has only a life to bring
For the flag.

These are the men whose hearts are rife
With the stress of the daring chase ;
These are the flower of the nation's life,
Picked men all, for the desperate strife,
Sons of a mettled race.
Forward swing, forward swing,
Who but these can such leaders bring
To the flag ?

* * * *

Hark ! there is scarce a hoof-beat's sound
In the tropic thickets deep ;
All unhorsed are the riders found,
Wearily over the burning ground
Their steadfast footsteps creep.
Still they swing, forward swing,
Dauntless, grim, unfaltering,
'Neath the flag.

Straight they march on the hidden foe,
Capron's troop in the van ;
Under the maddening fire they go ;
Hist ! who falls ? Must the best blood flow ?
Ay — it is but a man !
Forward swing, forward swing :
Ah, what glorious lives we fling
To the flag !

On, till the thorny* ground is won,
Snatched by the eager bands;
What of the fight when all is done?
The foe shall answer: "They tried, each one,
To seize us with their hands!"
Forward swing, forward swing,
New brave work shall the morrow bring
For the flag.

For lo! when the army sweeps along
To the bloody hill-top's crest,
Climbing and conquering, thousands strong,
There do the unhorsed riders throng,
Up — with the first and best.
Forward swing, forward swing,
Living, follow — and dying, cling
To the flag.

Sounding still, with an echo sweet,
Through the nation's inmost soul,
We hear the tramp of those toiling feet,
And the hoofs of the leader's horse, that beat
With a rhythmic thunder-roll.
Forward swing, forward swing,
Such are the hearts, the lives, we bring
For the flag!

*Las Guasimas — The Thorns.

THE MEN WE ARE

We are toilers and dreamers and plotters,

 We are rulers and fathers of men ;

We sleep under peaceful roof-trees,

 We rise to our work again ;

We sing of love by the hearthstone,

 We kiss dear lips at the door,

And That lies cold within us

 That we think shall rise no more.

But hark, the bugle ! It calls from far,

Each note drops clear as a falling star ;

Ye shall know us now for the men we are.

Up and away — away !

Be we men or brutes, that we leap to life

At the sound and scent of the teeming strife ?

That gain nor labor, nor child nor wife,

Shall bid us shrink or stay ?

For the women hear by the fireside,

 They come with their eyes aflame

To press the sword to our holding,

 To cry to the laggard, shame !

And the children dance to the bugle,

 They run to their mimic fight ;

And That which we sought to stifle

 Now stings us to fierce delight.

Oh, hark, the bugle ! It leads us far ;

We follow, follow, a flaming star !

Ye know us now for the men we are —

 What lives in our blood and breath.

There's a day that never will dawn again,

There's a cause to scorn or to save, and then,

Whether ye name us brutes or men,

 The hazard is life or death.

THE SOLDIER IDEAL

There are those who follow the rainbow,
The shining dream of peace,
Their only prayer that the sword shall drop,
And the bugle-call shall cease.
Their hands are cold and nerveless;
They have let the standards trail;
And when men cried, "The cause! the cause!"
They have answered, "Let it fail!"

But we have not so learned manhood,
We have not so known life;
We hold that the soul is strong in those
Who have scorned the flesh in strife.
We will lie in blood and anguish,
We will toil in fierce unrest,
For the seed of power in the land we love,
For the cause her hopes have blest.

They say we strike as the brute strikes,
They say that we hate the foe;
They call us mad with lust of blood,—
By the truth of God, not so!
We are sworn to a faith — a vision,—
Soul fronting soul, we stand;
And the foe who bleeds for the dream he serves
We heal with a tender hand.

Our work is crowned as Duty,
It is done — to our utmost breath!
Our joy is the stress of peril,
Our light is the face of Death.
We make no boast of courage,
We make no moan for pain;
And if we falter, at last — but once —
We have lived our years in vain.

If the life of ease be noblest,
If the highest gain be gold ;
If that be grace which is won with shame,
Or peace which is bought and sold ;
If life be the goal to pant for,
And only the flesh be life, —
Then are we bound by an idle oath
To a false and bestial strife.

But the heart of the child is with us,
And under our shield we guard
The love and strength of the woman,
The sight and song of the bard.
We have marched to the truth through struggle,
Through blood and fire to the light ;
And the toilers of peace have blessed our names,
In prayers of the quiet night.

We have stood at the front of nations,
We have built their age-long fame ;
We have passed them back, with bleeding hands,
The gifts we were spent to claim.
And they who follow the rainbow,
The shining dream of peace,
Shall owe their rest to our fearless toil,
When the bugle-call shall cease.

THE RESERVE

I stand where rolling vapors shroud
The golden hills that spread so fair;
Pale light is filtered through the cloud,
Thick moisture weights the clinging air.
I see no flash beyond the gloom,
Yet there the flame of battle runs,
And thence is borne the cry of doom,
The broken thunder of the guns!

My soul is shaken with their din,
Rocked with the standards borne on high;
I feel the sweeping charge begin;
My heart is spent with those who die!
Yet back and forth, with measured pace,
Beside the breast-works blank and tall,
I march the track with unmoved face,
And hold my manhood's blood in thrall.

The war-horse neighs behind the gate,
The horseman soothes him, at his side;
I guard the patient ranks that wait,
Heart-spurred, but silent,—restless-eyed.
They may not break the bound that keeps
Each man an atom in his place;
No baser is the guard that sleeps
Than he who leaps the appointed space!

With steady tramp, with close-locked lip,
I bear inert the silent gun.
See how the standards rise and dip,
There — where the scattering vapors run!
Who calls? Who passes? Who complains?
Who gives the challenge and reply?
My heart is tugging at its chains,
And pleading to the smoke-dimmed sky!

Noon dies,— nor finds the fighting done;
Still shriek the guns beyond the hill;
We know not if the day be won,
 We trust the word that holds us still.
Bravest when we at last despair
 Of summons swift by bugle call,—
Ah, praise us, comrades! for we bear
 A strain that makes your struggle small!

Oh, glorious ranks that break and charge,
 That feel the fierce unchecked desire —
The hope that stings — the impulse large
 That spurns the force of steel and fire!
With what high hearts you play with fate,
 Meet scathe or death, and cheering fall!
Take ye God-speed from us who wait,
 Mute guards beneath the barrack wall!

Earlier Poems

THE WATCHER

I sat in the silence, in moonlight that gathered
and glowed
Far over the field and forest, with tender in-
crease;
The low, rushing winds in the trees were like
waters that flowed
From sources of passionate joy to an ocean of
peace.

And I watched, and was glad in my heart, though
the shadows were deep,
Till one came and asked me, "Say why dost
thou watch through the night?"
And I said, "I am watching my joy! They who
sorrow may sleep,
But the soul that is glad cannot part with one
hour of delight."

Again in the silence I watched, and the moon
had gone down;
The shadows were hidden in darkness; the
winds had passed by;
The midnight sat throned, and the jewels were
bright in her crown,
For stars glimmered softly, oh, softly, from
depths of the sky.
And I sighed as I watched all alone, till again
came a voice:
"Ah, why dost thou watch? Joy is over, and
sorrow is vain."
And I said, "I am watching my grief. Let them
sleep who rejoice,
But the spirit that loves cannot part with one
hour of its pain."

Once more I sat watching, in darkness that fell
 like a death,
 The deep, solemn darkness that comes to make
 way for the dawn;
I looked on the earth, and it slept without motion
 or breath;
 And blindly I looked on the sky, but the stars
 were withdrawn;
And the voice spoke once more: "Cease thy
 watching, for what dost thou gain?"
 But I said, "I am watching my soul, to this
 darkness laid bare.
Let them sleep to whom love giveth joy, to whom
 love giveth pain,
 But the soul left alone cannot part with one
 moment of prayer."

LOSS AND GAIN

She walked apart, along the height,
 The stars above her bending head,
 And, marked by many a twinkling light,
 Below her steps the world was spread.
On one side drooped her shadowy hair;
 As slow she moved, her white robe shone;
 She lived in love's enchanted air,—
 The love of *One!*

Lo! from her dreary height she stepped
 Down to the world in lowly guise;
 Strange grief within her heart she kept,
 Deep wonder in her wistful eyes.
And now, as soft her footsteps move
 Along the valley's winding fall,
 She knows a purer, lonelier love,—
 The love of *All!*

CHANGES

How soon the wreath of summer droops and falls
From the year's languid hands! Alas, how
soon,
In calms of fading sun and brightening moon,
The still earth lists the Father's gentle calls,
Which say, "Give back thy sweets — lay down
thy flowers —
Awhile, O Earth, thy dear delights forego,
That thou awhile no life save hope may'st
know,
And rest in patience, numbering barren hours!"
How sweetly Earth prepares her for the change,
And suffers all her blooms to fall away!
How calm and gradual is the slow decay,
Till loss itself no more seems hard or strange.
O peaceful snow! O spirit-flower, that lives,
A wondrous bloom, upon the leafless waste!
O time that glides without delay or haste,
While winter dreams of more than summer gives!
So would I learn to bid my joys farewell,
And enter desolate ways with quiet heart;
For He who calls me thus to mourn apart,
Can speak through silence with so sweet a spell,
And strike so strange a joy through loss and
pain,
That rapture's self can hold no richer gain.

The After-Word

IF WORDS COULD REACH THEE

Dear soul, if words could reach thee,
 What message should be thine!
New readings of love's hidden lore,
 From this blind heart of mine;
New wisdom wrung from living,
 By death alone made clear;
Dear soul, if words could reach thee,
 Thou wouldst be glad to hear!

Dear love, if grief could touch thee,
 How well thy heart would know
The passion of untold regret,
 The helpless tears that flow
For days unblest and weary
 Through life's too stern demand.
Dear soul, if grief could touch thee,
 Thy heart would understand!

Dear heart, if Love can find thee,
 (He knows the larger way),
Then must thou hear the broken song
 He brings to thee to-day,
And with the old sweet welcome
 Give solace to his pain;
Dear heart, if Love can find thee,
 He will not plead in vain!

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